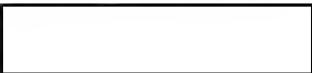


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26 October 1966

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26 October 1966

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

CONTENTS

1. Vietnam: Current situation report. (Page 1)
2. Malaysia: The government moves against leftist dissidents. (Page 3)
- 25X1
[Redacted]
4. Nigeria: Prospects for meaningful talks appear dim. (Page 5)
5. Cuba: Cubans linked to Venezuelan guerrilla operations. (Page 6)
6. Colombia: Leftist student leaders will probably try to provoke further disorders. (Page 7)

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[Redacted]

25X1

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

26 October 1966

*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The election of constituent assembly officers is scheduled to begin today and three southerners are the main contenders for the position of chairman.

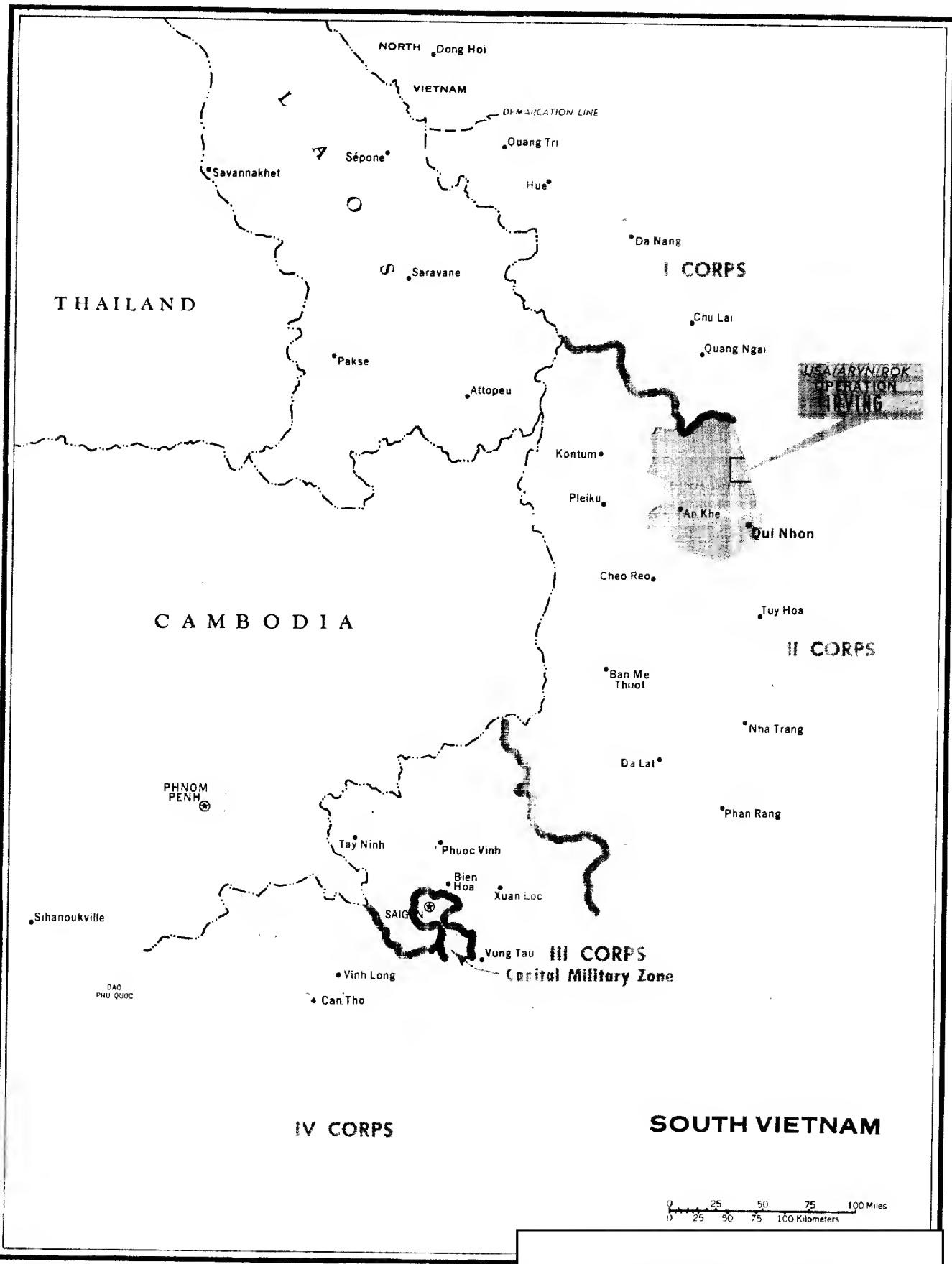
Moderate former chief of state Phan Khac Suu is the general favorite, but he is being opposed by Tran Van Van, whose more militant southern regionalism carries antigovernment and antimilitary overtones. Another southerner, La Thanh Nghe, has stated that he does not wish to oppose Suu directly, but will enter the contest as a compromise candidate should Suu and Van become deadlocked.

Meanwhile, methods of settling the cabinet dispute are being discussed. Vo Long Trieu, one of the dissident ministers whose resignations from Premier Ky's cabinet are still pending, yesterday proposed a face-saving device for resolving the problem. In a conversation with a US Embassy officer, Trieu stated that he and most of the other ministers would be satisfied if Premier Ky and the entire cabinet submitted pro-forma resignations to the Armed Forces Council, the theoretical seat of government power composed of all general officers and division commanders. However, Trieu felt that when Premier Ky returns from Manila, he would rather accept the resignations and name replacements.

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The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Only light contact between allied and Communist forces was reported yesterday in South Vietnam.

One of the most successful allied operations of the war--Operation IRVING--has ended in coastal Binh Dinh Province. This multibattalion search-and-clear operation, which began on 1 October about 20 miles north of Qui Nhon, trapped a large enemy force against the sea. Communist losses during the joint US - South Vietnamese - South Korean sweep totaled 1,973 killed and 1,765 captured. Allied casualty figures were 50 killed and 263 wounded. [redacted]

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Malaysia: The government has used President Johnson's visit as a pretext to move against dissidents, including the small Communist organization.

On 25 October police arrested 74 of about 100 on a target list. Those arrested are members of two small parties that have been involved in Communist united-front activity. Twenty-seven of them have participated in indoctrination courses given by the Malayan Communist Party at its camps in southern Thailand. With only a few days left before President Johnson's visit, police calculate that the Communists--with about half of their overt leaders under arrest--must either drop their plans for demonstrations or bring forward personnel who hitherto have remained concealed.

In a move to justify the arrests, the government issued a white paper that presented an exaggerated picture of the Communist threat to West Malaysia.

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Nigeria: Prospects for regenerating meaningful direct talks on a new unity formula appear dim.

A key member of the delegation from Eastern Nigeria to the interregional constitutional conference told the US consul in Enugu on 24 October that no Eastern delegates would return to Lagos, given present security conditions there. Supreme Commander Gowon reconvened the conference as scheduled despite the absence of the Easterners. The conference then adjourned once more for three additional days.

Eastern military governor Ojukwu's regime evidently is still anxious, however, to avoid the onus for any final breakdown in negotiations. In discussing the East's position, the delegation member claimed the Easterners had no intention of "closing the door" to a resumption of talks. He revealed that a memorandum was in preparation for circulation among the other delegations on 27 October. The Eastern delegate made it clear, however, that this document would restate the East's insistence on a constitutional formula providing for only a loose federal association. Furthermore, the document would contain proposals for interim arrangements counter to Gowon's announced plan for a 12-member civilian advisory committee.

In response to mounting pressure in the British cabinet for some UK action to check the current trend, British officials are again considering an early visit by some high-level political troubleshooter or the possibility of a Commonwealth mission. London's thinking is heavily conditioned, however, by concern over the entanglements which might result from any efforts on its part.

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Cuba: New evidence establishes a direct link between the Cuban regime and guerrillas now operating in Venezuela.

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Eyewitnesses alleged that a landing party consisting of 20 to 25 well-armed men in olive-drab uniforms went ashore in western Venezuela in late July. The Venezuelan Government, which at first suspected that the landing was a hoax, concluded in early August that a landing in fact had taken place as a diversion to draw its armed forces away from beleaguered guerrillas in Yaracuy state.

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Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders have re-emphasized the extreme, revolutionary hard line in Latin America since the January Tri-Continent Conference. The Cubans have long been suspected of materially aiding the action arm of the Guatemalan Communist Party, as documented by the recent involvement of a Cuban diplomat in Mexico City in smuggling arms to Guatemalan guerrillas. This, as well as Cuban assistance to the Venezuelans, indicates that the Cubans are willing to back their militant words with deeds in assisting selected guerrilla groups.

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*Colombia: Leftist student leaders will probably try to provoke further disorders in the wake of Monday's rioting at National University in Bogota.

Yesterday, student leaders called a 48-hour strike. During the incident on Monday, stones were thrown at President Lleras. In putting down the riot, the army violated university autonomy and arrested about 50 students, who are to be tried in military courts. These circumstances, together with the threat to Lleras' personal safety, make this one of the most serious student incidents to occur in Colombia in a number of years.

Lleras, who has consistently favored a strong stand against student agitation, gave leftist student leaders a severe set-back in September when he frustrated their plans to stage a strike. The student leaders probably will attempt to regain some of their lost prestige by capitalizing on the army's violation of the university's traditional privilege of sanctuary and the arrests of students. [redacted]

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